United Nations

Press Release

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council holds consultations to consider request by Turkey for Council meeting on "repressive situation in northern Iraq".

- Secretary-General sets up interdepartmental coordinating group to supervise implementation of Council resolution on Gulf war cease-fire.

- Secretary-General convenes meetings of representatives of United Nations agencies to prepare for emergency humanitarian relief programmes for Iraq and Kuwait.

- United Nations special mission to Kuwait says its report would be incomplete without testimony of Kuwaitis yet to return home.

- Secretary-General renews appeal for $104 million for Special Relief Programme for Angola.

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The Security Council held consultations late this afternoon on a request by Turkey for an immediate meeting to consider the repressive situation in northern Iraq.

The Council was also scheduled to hear a statement by the Secretary-General on the situation in El Salvador.

The Permanent Representative of Turkey, Mustafa Aksin, in a letter to the Council President, dated 2 April, said the prevailing situation in Iraq had caused 220,000 Iraqi citizens to gather along the Turkish border, in an attempt to flee Iraq. He said the Iraqi authorities were using an excessive amount of force, and called the repression against the civilian population "a threat to the region's peace and security".

Ambassador Aksin requested that a Council meeting be convened immediately to adopt the necessary measures to put an end to what he called "this inhuman repression being carried out on a massive scale".

(more)

For information media—not an official record

Speaking to correspondents following the Council meeting yesterday, the Turkish Ambassador said his Government was in no position to cope with so many hundreds of thousands of people. In reply to a question, he said the policy of sealing off the border with Iraq was "going to be maintained for as long as it can". He said Turkey was conscious of the problems of the Iraqi civilians and was doing everything to assist them by providing food, medicines and other humanitarian assistance.

France, supported by the United Kingdom, has also appealed for action in the Council to address the fate of Kurds and Shi'ites in Iraq.

Also speaking to the press yesterday, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir David Hannay, called for action to stop the killing and harassment of women and children in the north of Iraq. He said his delegation would be working closely with the French delegation and others in the Council to provide a response to the "tragic situation".

Commenting on yesterday's cease-fire resolution, the Permanent Representative of the United States, Thomas R. Pickering, told the press that the Council expected to see an Iraqi reply shortly but that there was no time deadline. He said the Council would first wait for an Iraqi reaction to the Secretary-General's report, in three days, on a United Nations observer unit to monitor the demilitarized zone between Iraq and Kuwait.

Also talking to correspondents yesterday, Iraq's Permanent Representative Abdul Amir Al-Anbari said he believed resolution 687 (1991) was "the most outrageous violation of the United Nations Charter". He said the Council had by far exceeded its authority and had acted illegally. The Iraqi Ambassador said the resolution was so "one-sided" that it was going to "destabilize the region rather than introduce peace in it".

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A United Nations spokesman announced today that the Secretary-General had decided to establish an interdepartmental coordinating group of senior United Nations officials to supervise and direct the implementation of the various provisions of Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

The decision comes in response to yesterday's six-Power resolution by which the Secretary-General was asked to report to the Council on Iraqi compliance with its provisions.

The composition of the coordinating group is as follows: Virendra Dayal, Chef de Cabinet; Martti Ahtisaari, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management; Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs; Carl-August Fleischhauer, United Nations Legal Counsel; Marrack Goulding, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs; Vasiliy S. Safronchuk, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs; Ronald I. Spiers, Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services; Kofi A. Annan, Controller; and J. Richard Foran, Assistant Secretary-General for General Services.

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In the absence of the Secretary-General, Mr. Dayal would chair the meetings of the coordinating group, the official said.

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The Secretary-General's spokesman said today that Mr. Perez de Cuellar had convened meetings of representatives of United Nations agencies and programmes to prepare coordinated programmes of emergency humanitarian relief for Kuwait and Iraq. The meetings were analysing the findings of the mission led by Under-Secretary-General Ahtisaari. Based on the coordinated programmes, the Secretary-General was planning to make an urgent international appeal for funding early next week, the spokesman said.

The agencies and programmes attending the meetings, which were taking place today, tomorrow and over the weekend, all participated in the Ahtisaari mission, the spokesman added.

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The United Nations special mission to Kuwait, led by former Under-Secretary-General Abdulrahim Abby Farah, has completed its present assignment and will leave Kuwait for New York later today.

The mandate of the mission was based on a request by the Kuwaiti Government to investigate loss of life and Iraqi practices against the civilian population during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

A United Nations official reported today that the mission, as it proceeded with its work, had become aware that many groups and individuals had yet to tell their story. It had succeeded in collecting useful information from various individuals and groups in Kuwait, which had been carefully recorded and would be reflected in its report. However, the official said, the large number of Kuwaitis who were either forcibly removed from the country or took refuge abroad during the occupation had yet to return to Kuwait. Any report which the mission might prepare at this stage would not be definitive and comprehensive if those individuals were denied the opportunity to present their testimony.

In order to ensure presentation of a credible and comprehensive report on the human rights element of the mission's mandate, he said, the Kuwaiti Government had sought assistance from the United Nations. The Secretary-General had already made arrangements with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights to provide the services of an expert for that purpose.

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The Secretary-General today renewed his appeal for immediate international assistance for the Special Relief Programme for Angola to help almost 2 million people who are under serious threat of starvation due to prolonged drought and civil war.

(more)

The Secretary-General issued his first appeal for $104 million last November, to meet the most basic and urgent needs of the targeted population over a six-month period.

After a suspension for about four months in all the activities of the relief programme, agreement was reached on 11 March for its resumption.

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